

"The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that describes the assistance provided under this Act during the preceding 180-day period."

The many requirements of this report are intended as a way for Congress to assess how effectively U.S. funds are being spent, shortfalls in U.S. resources that hinder the use of such funds, and steps the Government of Pakistan has taken to advance our mutual interests in countering extremism and nuclear proliferation and strengthening democratic institutions.

There is no intent to, and nothing in this Act in any way suggests that there should be, any U.S. role in micromanaging internal Pakistani affairs, including the promotion of Pakistani military officers or the internal operations of the Pakistani military.

The reports envisioned in this Section are not binding on Pakistan, and require only the provision of information by the executive branch to the U.S. Congress, in furtherance of the Act's stated purpose of strengthening civilian institutions and the democratically-elected Government of Pakistan.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington, DC, September 29, 2009.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI, H-232 Capitol Building,
Washington, DC.

Speaker of the House of Representatives,

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,

House of Representatives, H-204 Capitol Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER AND MR. REPUBLICAN LEADER: I write to express the State Department's strong support of S. 1707, the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009.

The bipartisan Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 will be an essential tool in support of our national security interests and underscores a multifaceted, multi-year commitment between the peoples of the United States and Pakistan.

I appreciate the hard work by many in both the House and the Senate in reaching this reconciled text, and urge its passage as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON.

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2009.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. HARRY REID,

Senate Majority Leader,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER AND MR. MAJORITY LEADER: As the United States Government continues to implement its strategy to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is important that we strongly signal to the Pakistani people our long-term commitment to partnering with them to combat terrorism and extremism.

We appreciate that the House and Senate have worked hard to finalize the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, a bipartisan bill that would underscore a long-term, multi-year commitment to increase civilian assistance to Pakistan.

The bill as revised addresses the key concerns we previously raised in an April 28, 2009, letter. We appreciated the opportunity to work with your committees on these concerns.

This bill would support U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Department of Defense strongly supports moving this bill to final passage by the

House and Senate as expeditiously as possible.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that, from the standpoint of the Administration's program, there is no objection to the presentation of this letter.

Sincerely,

ROBERT M. GATES,
Secretary of Defense.
M.G. MULLEN,
Admiral, U.S. Navy. •

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

MR. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, VSAC, for three important milestones it has reached this year. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the VSAC Talent Search Program, the 10th anniversary of the VSAC Gear UP Program, and the 10th anniversary of the Vermont Higher Education Investment Program.

Although small in size, Vermont has a long history of establishing national models for making higher education accessible to disadvantaged students. The University of Vermont provided Senator Justin Morrill the inspiration for the first and second Morrill Act. The student loan programs which have made college possible for millions of students each year bear the name of my former colleague and dear friend, Senator Bob Stafford.

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation has continued this tradition through innovative programs to encourage first-generation and low-income students to pursue their career and education goals. Each year more than 47,000 students and parents participate in one or more of their career, education and financial aid programs. In addition, VSAC has been at the forefront of efforts to reach young people with programs that link career ambitions with educational requirements and opportunities. This past year, VSAC's Start Where You Are program won a prestigious WebAward for Education Standard of Excellence from the Web Marketing Association. In a more traditional vein, VSAC staff was recognized this year with the David Swedlow Memorial College Access Staff Award of Excellence from the National College Access Network.

Several States have established not-for-profit State agencies to administer financial aid and to provide their residents and students attending their schools with quality counseling services and low-cost loans. Vermont pioneered this movement by creating the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation more than 40 years ago. VSAC has worked hard to establish and maintain strong and longstanding working relationships with Vermont's higher education institutions as well as K-12 schools to provide outreach programs critical to the economic vitality of Vermont.

The U.S. Department of Education has proposed that all future student

loans be made through direct lending from the Federal Government to students. The Direct Loan program is projected to save students millions of dollars in fees and interest payments. Additional savings would be distributed to States for school construction and grants for K-12 education. Unfortunately this proposal does not include a role for not-for-profit State agencies such as VSAC. I believe that is a significant oversight. Vermonters have come to rely on the high quality, comprehensive programs that VSAC offers. A one-size-fits-all Federal direct loan program does not acknowledge all of the hard work and experience of nonprofits such as VSAC and their tremendous staff. As this proposal makes its way through Congress, Senator SANDERS, Congressman WELCH, and I will be working for changes to ensure a role for nonprofit State financial aid agencies such as VSAC.

I congratulate VSAC on their landmark 40th anniversary, and I hope there will be many more to come.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING AMERICAN GOLD STAR MOTHER'S DAY

• MR. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize that September 27, 2009, is designated as "Gold Star Mother's Day."

It is fitting that we recognize the American Gold Star Mothers, whose sons and daughters have died in defense of the ideals of individual liberty. They should be honored and offered respect and gratitude for their personal sacrifice.

Gold Star Mother's Day is intended to honor women who deserve special recognition and gratitude for their tremendous personal loss on behalf of our country.

During the early days of World War I, a Blue Star was used to represent each soldier in military service of the United States, and as the war progressed and soldiers were killed or wounded in combat or died from wounds or disease, a Gold Star superimposed over the Blue Star designated the loss of these individuals. This tradition recognized soldiers for their ultimate sacrifice to our country, and the Gold Star offered families an outward symbol by which to honor the loss of a loved one. In 1928, the Gold Star tradition was formalized in Washington, DC, by a group of mothers who had lost sons and daughters in service to their country and met to form the American Gold Star Mothers organization. This organization is a non-denominational, non-profitable, and nonpolitical organization that is dedicated in supporting veterans, military families, and servicemembers returning from our present-day battlefields.

In 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt issued a proclamation which recognized Gold Star Mothers for their strength and inspiration to this country. The